



Lambda Letters Project

Lavender Library, Archives
and Cultural Exchange
Sacramento, CA
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The following article expresses a controversial view on a subject in which much is at stake. For these reasons, Lambda Letters Project will be glad to publish a well-written article in opposition to the views expressed below.

Getting Real

by Boyce Hinman, LLP Administrator

Recently I've asserted that we should demand much of elected officials and refuse to support them if they fail to meet our demands. I've been particularly hard on Democrats. All of this raises a number of reasonable issues which center around this question: is what I have been advocating realistic? Today I intend to respond to that question by raising and answering a series of related questions.

Question: Why have you been so hard on the Democrats? Haven't they been much better to the queer community than the Republicans?

Answer: In general the Democrats have been better to our community, but they have been far from perfect. President Clinton brought us "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and the greatest number of military discharges of queer people in our history. He also signed the Defense of Marriage Act prohibiting federal recognition of same-gender marriage. Governor Davis killed this year's clean needle exchange bill, A.B. 518.

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Landmark Needle-Exchange Bill Killed

In the first week of September, Governor Davis forced Assemblymember Kerry Mazzoni (D-San Jose) to withdraw her clean needle and syringe exchange bill, AB 518. The bill had been approved by both houses of the State Legislature and sent to the governor in late August. Davis said he would veto the bill. Mazzoni apparently withdrew AB 518 to avoid embarrassing the governor and imperil her ability to work with him next year.

At the last minute AB 136 (introduced by Carole Migden, D-San Francisco) was amended to deal with clean needle exchange and sent to the governor. This may have been done so that elected officials could say they had done something on needle exchange. As amended, AB 136 exempts public entities and their agents or employees from criminal prosecution for operating an authorized clean needle and syringe exchange program.

AB 136 is a good law. However, it leaves unchanged the requirement under current law that needle-exchange programs must be reauthorized every two weeks by county boards of supervisors. Thus every

Lambda Letters Progress Report

Messages Collected

August, 1999	27,003 letters & e-mails
In all of 1999	162,222 letters & e-mails

Dollars Spent

August, 1999	\$1,576
In all of 1999	\$19,736

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Lambda Letters Project

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To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy, and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered persons, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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Removing Work Barriers for Disabled Women

by Martha Courtot and Adrienne Lauby

After a major grassroots effort, disabled women and their allies are close to passing federal legislation that would remove impediments for disabled people who want to work. Nearly four years ago a national questionnaire identified barriers to employment as the number-one problem for the disabled.

Ninety percent of disabled women of working age live in poverty and dependency on various government assistance programs. The few who earn income average a mere \$372 per month. Yet many disabled women desire the income and sense of self-worth that a job provides.

The problem lies primarily in the Social Security Administration and other federal bureaucracies with cumbersome and penalizing regulations. For example, many of those whose jobs provide only low-income would be unable to afford health insurance to replace their Medicare. Yet, with few exceptions, people lose Medicare if they return to work. HR 1180, the Work Incentives Improvement Act, would allow disabled persons who return to work, but continue to earn a low income, to continue receiving Medicare.

HR 1180 has not only garnered 232 cosponsors, both Republicans and Democrats, but passed both Congressional houses. These victories were widely reported in the press but the bill remains stalled in a joint conference committee, stripped of the necessary appropriations budget. The conference committee is made up of members of the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives. The purpose of the conference committee is to negotiate on the different versions of HR 1180 passed by those two houses and come up with a compromise version of the bill. We need to make sure that the compromise bill is acceptable.

Passage of this bill will, among other things, change the relationships between people with disabilities, Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, and providers of rehabilitation or employment services. Too often disabled women forgo work that would enable them to

Disproportionate Impact of HIV on African-Americans

by Carolynn Race and Marty Martinez

LLP has previously reported on the disproportionate impact that HIV/AIDS is having in communities of color. New evidence that the disparity is getting worse was reported at the National HIV Prevention Conference in Atlanta in late August. Dr. Helene Gayle, Director of the National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), reported at the conference that in 1998, deaths from AIDS among African-Americans were almost 10 times higher than among white Americans.

Dr. Gayle also reported the results of a 1998 study, conducted by Dr. Mary Ann Chiasson of the New York City Department of Health and co-investigators, which found that African-American women represent 53 percent of AIDS cases in women in New York City.

African-American women were also three times more likely to die of AIDS than were white or Hispanic women. This disparity was not explained by differences in risk behaviors of the subjects. Dr. Chiasson's group also found that gay and bisexual African-American men were twice as likely to die of AIDS than were their white or Hispanic counterparts.

New data from the CDC show that AIDS killed 17,047 people in the United States last year—a 20 percent decline from 1997. Of those were 8,316 blacks, showing that 49 percent of total AIDS deaths came from a group that makes up only 13 percent of the U.S. population. Thirty-two percent of AIDS deaths in 1998 were among whites, for a total of 5,436. Among Hispanics there were 3,114 deaths, or 18 percent of the total.

These numbers are alarming and demonstrate the need for immediate action on both the state and federal levels. Please sign the letters enclosed to Governor Gray Davis and to President Clinton, urging them to put emergency resources into combating HIV/AIDS in communities of color.

"Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Is Dead

by Cliff Arnesen, *New England Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Veteran's Inc.*, and Cliff Anchor, Past Post Commander, Alexander Hamilton American Legion Post 448

"DA/DT/DP" is dead. In fact the U.S. military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" policy was dead on arrival. They never intended to abide by it and they have not done so.

The truth is, America has a dark and tragic 221-year history of prejudice and discrimination against her gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered military service members. Today, we now hold the cruel distinction of being the only group within our great nation and society that is openly discriminated against by the United States Government, via the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy which was codified into law by the U.S. Congress and placed into effect on February 28, 1994.

According to the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, a Washington, DC-based legal advocacy organization which works on behalf of active-duty GLBT servicemembers, the Pentagon discharged 997 servicemembers in 1997 at a cost of \$25 million and a record 1,145 gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered servicemembers in 1998. This represents a 92 percent increase in such discharges since the policy was implemented in 1994.

These discharge figures also represent the largest number of sexual orientation-based discharges in more than a decade, and almost a doubling of discharges since 1994. Clearly, this inhumane policy—which forces people to live in constant fear and lie about who and what they are as human beings—does not work. No one is safe because Pentagon officials have consistently failed to issue specific guidelines to base commanders.

Indeed, the refusal and failure of the Pentagon brass to set clear guidelines and to evenhandedly enforce the provisions of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" is evidence of their unwillingness to enforce the policy. The Pentagon has always asked and always pursued. The pursuers, even though they break the law and commit criminal fraud, are never prosecuted. This, of course, sends the clear message that criminality in the

military, if directed against minorities, is not only tolerated but is actually encouraged. Thus, no one is safe.

In light of the 4,000+ servicemembers discharged under the inhumane policy since its implementation in 1994—and due to the brutal murders of U.S. Army PFC Barry Winchell at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, on July 5th of this year and of U.S. Navy Seaman Allen Schindler in Sasebo, Japan, on October 27, 1992—the Pentagon's recent promises to issue guidelines and enforce the directives of the DA/DT/DP policy ring hollow and are too little and much too late!

Furthermore, all women in the armed forces are particularly vulnerable under the DA/DT/DP policy. There are many reported cases of heterosexual women who have been accused of being lesbians by immoral male superiors because they would not consent to their sexual advances.

Please write to Congress. Urge them to support Congressional action to repeal the "Don't Tell, Don't Ask, Don't Pursue" policy and urge them to call upon the president to meet with interested groups who are seeking an end to this inhumane policy.

Removing Work Barriers

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be independent of public assistance income because they cannot risk losing their access to Medicare and state health insurance programs.

Please help pass the Work Incentives Improvement Act and remove this barrier to disabled women's return to work. Please write to Congress and urge them to assure that disabled people will not lose their Medicare if they return to work and continue to have limited income.

Needle-Exchange Bill Killed

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two weeks county supervisors would be pounded in the public arena by needle-exchange opponents. Most supervisors won't be able to take this kind of heat and so won't establish the programs in the first place. The end result is that people will die because state elected officials didn't have the guts to approve Mazzoni's original bill, AB 518.

October Legislative Update

The following is a list of bills supported by the Lambda Letters Project this year. The stated status of each bill is as of the Legislature's close of business on September 10th. The Legislature is now in recess and will not reconvene until January, 2000.

Note that the status lines of some bills say the bills are "two-year" bills. This means that they were not approved by the Legislature prior to the September 10th deadline and the bills' authors have been given permission to bring them up again next year.

HIV/AIDS Issues

AB 16 (Mike Honda, D-San Jose)

Purpose: Under current law state and counties split the costs of providing publicly funded in-home supportive services for aged blind and disabled persons. However, if the counties or the agencies they contract with to provide the services grant a pay raise to the workers providing the care, the counties must foot the whole cost of the raise. This bill changes the law to say that even these raises will be funded equally by the state and the counties. The budget just passed allows the state to pay 50 cents of any raise. The author is still pushing this bill to get the state to pay 50 percent.

Status: Passed by the Assembly. Stuck in the Senate. A two-year bill.

LLP Position: Support.

AB 103 (Carole Migden, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: To require the State Department of Health Services to implement a unique identifier system in order to conduct HIV surveillance and improve data collection while maximizing confidentiality protections.

Status: Passed by the Legislature. Sent to the governor for signature.

LLP Position: Support

AB 136 (Carole Migden, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: As amended in early September at the request of Assemblymember Kerry Mazzoni, it relieves counties and their agents or employees from criminal prosecution for establishing and implementing a clean needle and syringe exchange program. This bill is a substitute for AB 518, which was withdrawn under pressure from the governor.

Status: Passed and sent to the governor for signature.

LLP Position: Support.

AB 142 (Kevin Shelley, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: To require that every healthcare service plan provide medical care in accordance with accepted medical practices and provide emergency healthcare services, and also to ensure confidentiality of the medical information of an enrollee. Plans must provide access to a wide variety of primary healthcare providers and specialty healthcare providers to ensure that the enrollee is able to choose a qualified doctor or other healthcare provider.

Status: Approved by the Assembly. Stuck in the Senate. A two-year bill.

LLP Position: Support.

AB 155 (Carole Migden, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: To allow people with AIDS who return to work—but whose income is below 250 percent of the federal poverty standard—to continue to receive Medi-Cal benefits.

Status: Passed by the Legislature. Sent to the governor for signature.

LLP Position: Support.

AB 217 (Scott Wildman, D-Glendale)

Purpose: Language about requiring Medi-Cal healthcare providers to add new drugs to their HIV/AIDS drug formularies has been removed from the bill. AB 217 does require Medi-Cal providers to inform their HIV-positive patients of the steps, if any, that have been taken to refer them to physicians with substantial experience in treating AIDS. It also requires the state to pay Medi-Cal providers enough for caring for HIV-positive patients, in order to enable those



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October Legislative Update

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providers to attract the services of physicians qualified to treat HIV/AIDS.

Status: Passed by the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature.

LLP Position: Support.

AB 518 (Kerry Mazzoni, D-San Rafael)

Purpose: To permit local jurisdictions to establish legal clean needle and syringe exchange programs in California to reduce the spread of AIDS and other diseases spread by the shared use of needles.

Status: Passed by the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature. Withdrawn by the bill's author when the governor threatened to veto it.

LLP Position: Support.

AB 851 (Fred Keeley, D-Santa Cruz)

Purpose: To expand the AIDS prevention education requirement in grades 7–12 to include instruction in prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and to require related instructional materials to be medically accurate and free of race, gender, and ethnic bias.

Status: Passed by the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature.

LLP Positions: Support.

AB 1047 (Marco Firebaugh, D-Huntington Park)

Purpose: To require that the state make new AIDS medications—provided under the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP)—available to patients within 30 days of being notified that the drugs have been approved by the FDA for the treatment of AIDS.

Status: Passed by the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature.

LLP Position: Support.

SB 77 (Kevin Murray, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: Existing law says that a worker's family may apply for a worker's compensation death benefit when he or she dies from a job-related accident or illness. The claim must be submitted within a specified time from the onset of the job-related illness or accident. A longer time is allowed in deaths from asbestosis because of the typically longer time from exposure to asbestos and death from asbestosis. SB 77 says that HIV and AIDS have a similarly long period of development and so should have a similarly long time during

which a claim for a worker's compensation death benefit may be claimed.

Status: Passed by the Legislature. Signed by the governor.

LLP Position: Support.

SB 1258 (Richard Polanco, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To require California to solicit approval from the federal government for California to provide Medi-Cal coverage to individuals who are HIV-positive, but who do not have AIDS. Current federal regulations limit the provision of Medi-Cal to people who have AIDS or who are otherwise disabled.

Status: Passed by the Senate. Stuck in the Assembly. A two-year bill.

LLP Position: Support.

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgendered Issues

AB 26 (Carole Migden, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: To define "domestic partners" and provide for the registration of domestic partnerships with the secretary of state. The bill would also specify procedures for the termination of domestic partnerships. The bill had also required group health care insurance plans that offer coverage of employees and their spouses to also offer coverage to employees and their domestic partners. This feature was dropped at the insistence of Governor Davis.

Status: Passed by the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature. The governor has announced he will sign it.

LLP Position: Support.

AB 107 (Wally Knox, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To authorize the state and local governments to provide health care benefits to the domestic partners of their employees.

Status: Passed by the Assembly. Stuck in the Senate. A two-year bill.

LLP Position: Support.

AB 208 (Wally Knox, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To provide that the penalty for a defendant who is found guilty of murder in the first degree is imprisonment in state prison for life without the possibility of parole if the victim was intentionally killed because of the victim's disability, gender, or sexual orientation—or because of the defendant's perception

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October Legislative Update

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of the victim's disability, gender, or sexual orientation—and this allegation has been found to be true.

Status: Passed by the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature.

LLP Position: Support.

AB 222 (Sheila Kuehl, D-Santa Monica)

Purpose: Called the Dignity for All Students Act. Would amend the California Education Code to add "sexual orientation" to those sections that now protect students from other forms of discrimination. It would specifically bar sexual orientation discrimination in public education, including student programs and activities, athletics, curricula, employment, and financial aid.

Status: Failed by one vote on the Assembly floor.

Replaced by AB 537 which was passed by the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature.

LLP Position: Support.

AB 537 (Dion Aroner, D-Berkeley)

Purpose: Bans sexual orientation-based discrimination against students in public schools. Is intended to make schools crack down on violence against queer youth.

Status: Passed the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature. The governor seems to be leaning towards signing it.

LLP Position: Support.

AB 1001 (Antonio Villaraigosa, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To amend the California Fair Employment and Housing Act to prohibit employment and housing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Status: Passed by the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature.

LLP Position: Support

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SB 75 (Kevin Murray, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To enact the Domestic Partnership Act of 1999, which would define "domestic partners" and provide for the registration of domestic partnerships with the secretary of state. The bill would also specify procedures for the termination of domestic partnerships.

Status: Passed by the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature. The governor will likely veto it.

LLP Position: Support.

SB 118 (Tom Hayden, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To require employers to grant family and medical leave to employees who need to care for their domestic partners.

Status: Passed by the Senate and sent to the Assembly. Passed all necessary Assembly committees. Was held back under pressure from Governor Davis. A two-year bill.

LLP Position: Support.

Person of Color Issues

AB 63 (Denise Moreno Ducheny, D-National City)

Purpose: To create an Office of Border Health, which would act to increase cooperation between Mexican and California/US health authorities in tracking disease, monitoring the health of persons along the border region, and would convene a task force of community stakeholders to help develop a strategic plan to address the health concerns in the border region.

Status: Passed by the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature.

SB 44 (Richard Polanco, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To affirm that the laws of California, including the restrictions on affirmative action, do not prevent governmental agencies from engaging in focused outreach and recruitment of minority groups and women if any group is under represented in entry level positions or in an educational institution.

Status: Passed by the Senate and sent to the Assembly. Passed by the Assembly and sent to the governor. Vetoed by the governor.

LLP Position: Support.

SB 66 (Kevin Murray, D-Culver City)

Purpose: Existing law requires the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training develop and

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disseminate training for police officers, including instruction on racial and cultural diversity, in order to foster mutual respect and cooperation between law enforcement and members of all racial and cultural groups. This bill additionally would require the commission to develop guidelines that California law enforcement agencies would be required to adopt for the purpose of establishing race neutral criminal profiles.

Status: Passed by the Senate. Stuck in the Assembly.

A two-year bill.

LLP Position: Support.

SB 73 (Kevin Murray, D-Culver City)

Purpose: Would allow the state to establish programs and goals for state contracting with small businesses.

Status: Passed by the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature.

LLP Position: Support.

SB 78 (Kevin Murray, D-Culver City)

Purpose: Existing law requires the Department of Justice to issue an annual report containing the criminal statistics of the preceding calendar year. This bill would require this annual report to contain information about the race, ethnicity, approximate age, and gender of the people stopped in traffic stops.

Status: Passed by the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature.

LLP Position: Support.

SB 82 (John Vasconcellos, D-San Jose)

Purpose: To provide that any alien who is otherwise eligible for Medi-Cal services, but who does not meet specified requirements relating to residency status (undocumented alien), is eligible for medically necessary pregnancy-related services.

Status: Many of the features of this bill were amended into AB 1107, an appropriations bill for the Department of Fish and Game. That bill was signed by the governor and the author then dropped SB 82.

LLP Position: Support.

SB 613 (Hilda Solis, D-El Monte)

Purpose: To make permanent the Office of Multicultural Health within the California Department of Health Services.

Status: Passed by the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature.

LLP Position: Support

Women's Issues

AB 39 (Robert Hertzberg, D-Van Nuys)

Purpose: To require individual and group health care service plans to cover the cost of FDA-approved prescription contraceptives.

Status: Passed the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature.

LLP Position: Support.

AB 40 (Howard Wayne, D-San Diego)

Purpose: To establish the Breast Cancer Treatment Program for purposes of providing breast cancer treatment services to uninsured and underinsured women with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Also to require the State Department of Health Services to administer the program only when the Legislature has appropriated funds for the program.

Status: Passed by the Assembly. Stuck in the Senate. A two-year bill.

LLP Position: Support.

AB 398 (Carole Migden, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: To authorize the sale of bonds to provide funds for government-backed affordable housing.

Status: Stuck in the Senate. A two-year bill.

LLP Position: Support.

AB 633 (Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento)

Purpose: Would hold retailers and manufacturers liable for contractors who pay employees less than minimum wage and refuse overtime benefits. It also extends the right of individual workers to sue for back wages and penalties if the administrative process fails to resolve the situation.

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Deborah A. Brooks
Certified Public Accountant



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October Legislative Update

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Status: Passed by the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature.

LLP Position: Support.

SB 41 (Jackie Speier, D-Daly City)

Purpose: To require disability insurance providers that cover prescription medications to include FDA-approved prescription contraceptives in their list of covered medications.

Status: Passed by the Legislature and sent to the governor for signature. Signed by the governor.

LLP Position: Support.

SB 56 (Hilda Solis, D-El Monte)

Purpose: To prohibit employers from punishing employees who take time off to testify in court in domestic abuse cases, as long as employees give reasonable notice to the employer, prior to taking time off, that he or she is required to appear in court to obtain or attempt to obtain any relief to help ensure the health, safety, or welfare of a domestic violence victim or his

or her child.

Status: Passed by the Legislature. Signed by the governor.

LLP Position: Support.

SB 193 (Joe Baca, D-San Bernardino)

Purpose: Existing law provides for the Breast Cancer Research Account in the Breast Cancer Fund. Ninety percent of the money's in the Breast Cancer Research Account is allocated to the Breast Cancer Research Program created at the University of California. This bill would require the State Department of Health Services to offer for sale breast cancer license plates to be sold at a price determined by the department, with the proceeds to be deposited into the Breast Cancer Research Account in the Breast Cancer Fund.

Status: Was passed by the Senate and sent to the Assembly. Approved by the Assembly Transportation Committee and sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Was blocked by Assemblymember Carole Migden because a bill in the Senate on Girl Scouts was not moving in that house.

LLP Position: Support.

the news resource of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community

OUTWORD

newsmagazine

The staff and management of Outword Newsmagazine fully supports the work and goals of Lambda Letters Project and offers its profound gratitude to the volunteers and staff for making those goals a reality.

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Getting Real

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On the other hand, Republican Congressmember Tom Campbell was the first major elected official to oppose the Knight Initiative, which would ban recognition of same-gender marriage in California. Republican Dan Lungren supported last year's transgender hate crimes bill and thus contributed much to its passage by the State Legislature. Governor Wilson signed that bill. Republican Ward Connerly played a major part in the approval of domestic partner benefits for University of California employees last year.

I am harder on Democrats because many of them have abandoned the highest ideals of their party. We and other minority communities are suffering as a result.

Question: Who will protect the queer community if we abandon the major parties?

Answer: This question assumes that the Democrats and Republicans will be here forever. In fact, political parties come and go and their dominance in a particular region of the country waxes and wanes. Table I below lists the major political parties throughout much of our nation's history. People depending on the Federalist Party in the 1820s would have been out of luck.

Table I. Major U.S. Political Parties

Years	Parties
1790–1820	Federalist & Whig
1820–1860	Whig & Democratic Republican
1860–Now	Democratic & Republican

During the first half of this century, the Democrats had a hammer lock on the South. They were the party to go to if you needed help in those states. However, starting in the mid-sixties, the Republicans became a major force in the South as conservative Southerners grew disenchanted with the national Democratic Party's civil rights policies. As a result, seven of the fourteen Southern states now have Republican governors. All of

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to find out who represents you.

this suggests we shouldn't assume that any one party will be around to protect us forever.

Will the Democrats, or any other party, be there forever to protect us? As the song says, "It ain't necessarily so."

Question: Is it realistic to think that we can gain our full rights without the support of one of the major political parties? Doesn't that suggest we must cooperate with and support the major parties?

Answer: Yes and no. In a paradoxical way, sometimes we must oppose the major parties to change their attitudes on the issues we care about. For example, in the late 1800s in Great Britain, the suffragettes depended on the Liberal party to give women the right to vote. The Liberals dominated British politics for the last half of the 1800s.

They kept telling women they supported women's suffrage, but the country wasn't ready for it. Nothing changed until women abandoned the Liberal party and began a campaign of civil disobedience. By the early part of this century the Liberals had become a minor party and women got the vote. The situations faced by the suffragettes and ourselves are comparable. Their success suggests that we do better to demand what is rightfully ours than to accept excuses from our political leaders.

Question: Won't we lose in the short run? Couldn't we lose some of our current gains if the Democrats get mad at us?

Answer: There is no way of knowing for sure. However, one basic fact is that politicians will generally do as little as possible. If we appear willing to accept crumbs, crumbs are what we will get. If we become more demanding we may get much more than we thought possible. This might be even more true if we joined other minorities in demanding that all minorities get full rights and equal protection under the law. All of the minorities in this state, combined, could in fact be a powerful majority.

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Plans for a Transgender Bill of Rights

In recent months Lambda Letters' Administrator, Boyce Hinman, has held meetings with members of the trans community in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Representatives of the California Alliance for Pride and Equality (CAPE) have also attended these meetings. The purpose of the meetings was to plan an introduction of a trans civil rights bill in the State Legislature next year. In late September Boyce met with a similar informal group in Los Angeles. It now appears that groups in at least those two areas will be working with us to support the introduction and passage of trans-friendly legislation.

The groups seek the introduction of two bills. One would amend the Fair Employment and Housing Act to ban gender expression-based discrimination in employment and housing. This bill would provide major protection for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, as well as transgendered folk. It has been found that many lesbians, gays, and bisexuals experience discrimination, not because they are homosexual, but because they are too butch or too fem. That's gender expression-discrimination, folks.

A second bill might reform the process for obtaining legal recognition of a person's change of gender. Apparently the process for gaining this recognition is pretty straightforward when the petitioner was born in, and currently lives in, California. However, current law makes no provision for situations where a petitioner was born in another state and now lives in California, or vice versa.

The groups have also begun discussing which legislators to approach about introducing the legislation and what steps the community must take to support the bill(s) once they are introduced. CAPE's lobbyist has

Have you experienced employment discrimination because of your actual or perceived sexual orientation? If so, you may register a complaint with one of the following Division of Labor Standards Enforcement district offices.

Bakersfield (805-395-2710)	Eureka* (415-557-7878)
Fresno (209-248-8400)	Long Beach (310-590-5044)
Los Angeles (213-897-4037)	Marysville (916-741-4061)
Oakland* (415-557-7878)	Redding* (415-557-7878)
Sacramento (916-323-4920)	Salinas* (415-557-7878)
San Bernardino (909-383-4333)	San Diego (619-637-5500)
San Francisco* (415-557-7878)	San Jose* (415-557-7878)
Santa Ana (714-558-4111)	Santa Barbara (805-963-1438)
Santa Rosa (707-576-2363)	Stockton (209-948-7770)
Van Nuys (818-901-5312)	Ventura (805-654-4538)

*These cities share an office.

kindly provided us with a list of potential authors of the bills.

Lambda Letters plans to provide its prodigious letter-writing support to this legislation. In 1999, the Project delivered over 21,000 letters and e-mail messages in support of AB 222 (the Dignity for All Students Bill) and its successor, AB 537. It seems quite possible that we could generate the same volume of mail on a trans bill next year.

However, much help is needed from the community. We need examples of the discrimination faced by the trans community. Anonymous statements are helpful, but it's also necessary to find people willing to testify about their experiences before legislative committees in Sacramento. Others are needed to gather signatures on sample letters and forward e-mail alerts issued by Lambda Letters. In general, people are needed to generate a groundswell of support for the bills once they are introduced. Interested persons may contact Boyce Hinman in Northern California at (916) 965-6851, LambdaLP@aol.com; or Lori Norman in Southern California at (310) 390-5095, BettyBoop_1930@hotmail.com.

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